

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BONN 12204 031754Z
ACTION OES-07

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 EA-12 ISO-00 PA-02 ICA-20 ACDA-12
CIAE-00 INR-10 IO-14 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 EB-08
NRC-07 SOE-02 DODE-00 SS-15 SP-02 CEQ-01 /133 W
-----012221 040333Z /75

R 031721Z JUL 78
FM AMEMBASSY BONN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9883
INFO AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY TOKYO
AMEMBASSY OTTAWA
AMEMBASSY VIENNA
USDOE WASHDC
USDOE GERMANTOWN

UNCLAS BONN 12204

USIAEA, USOECD ALSO FOR EMBASSY, USEEC

DEPT PASS NRC

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ENRG, TECH, GW
SUBJECT: REPORTS OF REACTOR INCIDENTS IN GERMANY

REF: BONN11445

1. SUMMARY. THERE IS CONTINUED CONCERN ABOUT THE
DELAYED ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE REACTOR INCIDENT AT BRUENS-
BUETTEL (REF) AND FIRST PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENTS OF THE
EVENT SHOW THAT IT HAD BEEN CAUSED BY HUMAN ERROR. THE
DISCUSSION OF THIS INCIDENT WAS NOURISHED BY THE
DISCLOSURE OF ANOTHER, AT THE RESEARCH REACTOR AT
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GEESTHACHT, WHERE A BULLDOZER HAD DISRUPTED A RADIO-
ACTIVE WATER SEWAGE PIPE AND WATER HAD DRAINED INTO THE
GROUND. IN A THIRD EVENT, THE PRESS HAD REPORTED CRACKS
IN THE CONCRETE SHELL OF THE REACTOR AT BIBLIS. END
SUMMARY.

2. ON JUNE 27 THE PARLIAMENTARY WORKING GROUP FOR

REACTOR SAFETY COMMENTED THAT THE INCIDENT AT BRUENS-BUETTEL HAD SHOWN THAT ALL RISK ASSESSMENTS WERE INVALID, AS LONG AS THEY DID NOT INCORPORATE THE SO CALLED HUMAN FACTOR. THE PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION INDICATED THAT AN "ALMOST OPTIMAL SAFETY SYSTEM HAD BEEN DETRIMENTED BY HUMAN FAILURE". THE CHRONOLOGY OF THE ACCIDENT SHOWS THAT AN 8 CM SOCKET IN THE FRESH STEAM SYSTEM BURST AND LET 25 ATM STEAM OUT FOR ABOUT THREE HOURS. THE REACTOR CREW HAD THEN SWITCHED OFF THE AUTOMATIC SCRAM DEVICE, BECAUSE THEY ASSUMED THAT ESCAPING STEAM WAS NOT RADIOACTIVE AND THAT AN OVER-PRESSURE IN THE MACHINE HOUSE HAD CAUSED AN AUTOMATIC SCRAM WITHIN FIVE MINUTES. ALTHOUGH TWO OF THE EIGHT MONITORING DEVICES INDICATED INCREASING RADIOACTIVITY, THE STAFF DID NOT CORRECT ITS DECISION. IN TOTAL SOME 100 TONNES OF STEAM GOT OUT, PART OF WHICH WAS RELEASED INTO THE OPEN THROUGH PRESSURE FLAPS. THE REMAINDER CONDENSED IN THE MACHINE HOUSE CAUSING SHORT CIRCUIT AFTER ABOUT THREE HOURS WHICH EVENTUALLY LED TO THE SCRAM.

3. A FEW DAYS AFTER THIS INCIDENT ANOTHER REACTOR MISHAP BECAME KNOWN. THE SCHLESWIG-HOLSTEIN MINISTRY FOR SOCIAL AFFAIRS ANNOUNCED THAT A BULLDOZER HAD DISRUPTED THE SEWAGE PIPE OF THE RESEARCH REACTOR AT GEESTHACHT DURING CONSTRUCTION WORK ON JUNE 21. THE CONSTRUCTION FIRM HAD NOT REPORTED THIS TO THE RESEARCH

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CENTER OPERATING THE REACTOR AND THUS SOME 9 CUBIC METERS OF LOW RADIOACTIVE WATER WERE DISCHARGED INTO THE GROUND. THE MINISTRY ASSURED THAT AT NO INSTANT THERE HAD BEEN IMMINENT DANGER. AN OFFICIAL STATED THAT NEITHER THE DRIVER OF THE BULLDOZER NOR THE RESPONSIBLE COMMUNAL AUTHORITY HAD KNOWN ABOUT THE EXISTENCE OF THE PIPE.

4. THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE FOR REACTOR SAFETY ANNOUNCED THAT THE DISCOVERED CRACKS IN THE CONCRETE CONTAINMENT OF THE REACTOR AT BIBLIS WERE OF NO SIGNIFICANCE TO THE SAFETY OF THE PLANT.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: REPORTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 03 jul 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 jan 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978BONN12204
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780274-1141
Format: TEL
From: BONN
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t197807101/aaaadhcc.tel
Line Count: 107
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 9a48c06a-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION OES
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 BONN 11445
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 29 mar 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: N/A
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1849335
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: REPORTS OF REACTOR INCIDENTS IN GERMANY
TAGS: ENRG, TECH, GE
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/9a48c06a-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014